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## JFK Book Tempest



WASHINGTON — Despite the millions of published words both here and abroad about the Manchester book on the Kennedy assassination, something more should be said. The controversy need never have arisen except for three fatal errors of judgment.

The first occurred when Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy granted William Manchester the exclusive right to interview friends and relatives of the late President about the tragedy, instructed those kith-and-kin to discuss the subject with no one else, and tried to prevent other authors from writing books about it.

THE MOST pertinent comment on her procedure came from Jim Bishop, best-selling author of "The Day Lincoln Was Shot," who, after being directed by Jackie to abandon the book he was preparing on JFK's death, reportedly remarked: "The Kennedys are trying to copyright the assassination."

The second error was committed by Manchester, who consented to write the book after two other well-known authors had rejected Mrs. Kennedy's unusual terms. Would a truly self-respecting author agree to write a historic work which had to be approved in every respect by members of the family of the central figure?

The third error of judgment occurred when Jacqueline Kennedy and Senator Robert F. Kennedy, despite their stipulation that they must "approve" the manuscript, declined to read it.

True, such a task would have been

painful, but if they could not bring themselves to fulfill their side of the bargain by perusing the manuscript in its entirety, they should have freed Manchester from the unnatural restriction.

Having a few friends and employes comb the work, picking out passages which they felt might be offensive to Mrs. Kennedy and others, is somewhat similar to quoting statesmen out of context.

If Mrs. Kennedy did not want her personal thoughts and recollections used in the book, then she should have chosen someone other than her hand-picked biographer of the tragedy to conduct the 10-hour tape-recorded interview with herself.

And what of the anti-Johnson tone of the book? Nearly 18 months ago this columnist wrote the first detailed account of the friction between the Kennedy group and President Johnson aboard the presidential plane returning from Dallas. The information was provided by an intimate member of the Kennedy entourage who, having been on board, was an active participant.

EVEN HE, a Kennedy partisan who actively disliked LBJ, apparently found nothing to criticize in the attitude or behavior of President and Mrs. Johnson during that sad trip back to Washington.

The animosity seemed all on the side of the others, who resented the fact that someone other than a Kennedy had automatically taken the governmental place of their fallen leader.

Whether or not one admires the Johnsons of Johnson City has nothing to do with the fact that they seemingly made every effort to be kind.